

## Stand Beside Them

When I was younger, I went with my choir to a VA hospital, and we sang patriotic songs to lift the patients' spirits. That day happened to be the one-hundredth birthday of one of the veterans. How touching it was to see the nurses wheeling him out to see us. Even though his hearing was almost null, and his lips would no longer stretch into a smile, let alone speak, his eyes spoke to me.

Those eyes are worth the effort to stand beside the veterans. How can we do this? Going to the VA hospital as I did is a start. Try thanking someone in your own family for his services. For example, one of my cousins is a soldier who has served in Iraq. My grandpa was in WWII. He had to endure many things ... even friends killed under friendly fire. I often sit and talk with him about war in general: intriguing subjects such as strategics.

Additionally, if you ever see a man or woman dressed in uniform, thank them for their services. They have had to leave home, step outside of their comfort zones, into a world that threatens their very lives. When we think of bravery, most people think of soldiers, people who fight against the odds, people who risk their lives for our protection. Give them flowers ... yes, even the boys ... send them cards, give them encouragement, if only in a smile or a pat on the back. Just a little effort will be greatly appreciated.

Veterans have gone through more than any of us could know. Even watching *Saving Private Ryan* or *Forest Gump* does not let me fully comprehend the trials, for I have never experienced war first hand, and after hearing stories, I hope I never

do. We can dream in our fantasies that glory is found in war ... but it is not. The glory is found in the people who fight in wars: who risk their lives, physically and mentally, to protect our nation. Thank you, veterans, for all you do and all you have done.